

# Battle Creek Wilderness Study Area

## 1. The Study Area -- 32,180 acres

The Battle Creek WSA (ID-16-49E [ID-111-49E]) is located in Owyhee County about 90 air miles south of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 32,180 acres of BLM lands, one state-owned 600 acre inholding and a 40 acre private inholding (see Table 1). The BLM acreage includes 640 acres acquired from the state in 1987.

Seventy percent of the WSA's 43-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads, fence lines and a gas pipeline. The remainder of the boundary is along legal subdivisions including 9.25 miles of nonfederal property. Two cherry-stem roads enter the southern part of the WSA. The WSA's southern boundary adjoins the Owyhee River-Deep Creek WSA (ID-16-49D).

The WSA consists of a flat to gently rolling sagebrush-, bitterbrush- and bunchgrass-covered plateau dissected by 19 miles of canyons, including 16 miles of Battle Creek. The canyons are up to 400 feet deep, narrow and meandering. Portions of the canyons that are not sheer-walled are covered with sagebrush and bunchgrasses while the riparian area consists of a narrow band of lush grasses, rushes and sedges.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1989. A 420 acre tract of BLM land adjacent to the WSA and a 640 acre tract within the WSA acquired from the state were included in the study process under the authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA.

Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for this WSA: a partial wilderness alternative where 32,520 acres of BLM land (including the 1,060 acres studied under the authority of Section 202 of FLPMA) would be designated as wilderness and 80 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; two additional partial wilderness alternatives where 2,680 and 27,020 acres would be designated as wilderness, and 29,500 and 5,580 acres, respectively, would be released for uses other than wilderness; an all wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness alternative where the one mile of the East Fork Owyhee River within the WSA (320 acres) would be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems as a portion of a larger wild river area.

## **2. Recommendation and Rationale**

**32,520 acres recommended for  
wilderness**

**80 acres recommended for  
nonwilderness**

The recommendation for the Battle Creek WSA is to designate 32,520 acres as wilderness and release 80 acres for nonwilderness uses. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The 32,520 acres recommended for wilderness are shown as the nonshaded area on the Battle Creek Proposal map. This recommendation would further apply to any inholding acreage, to 320 acres of state land adjacent to the WSA and to 240 acres of private land interlocked between this WSA and WSA ID-16-49D if acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix I lists all nonfederal land within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on the acquisition of these lands.

The 32,520 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 19 miles of spectacularly scenic canyon and 29,760 acres of surrounding plateau. The area is natural in appearance, has outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation and offers significant special features. The area is manageable to protect wilderness characteristics over the long term with a minimum of resource conflicts. The 32,520 acres recommended for designation are a portion of a proposed 385,080 acre Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness which would include about 270 miles of desert canyon, 164 miles of whitewater boating opportunities and 292,640 acres of plateau.

The 420 acres of BLM land outside the southeast boundary of the WSA have wilderness values and were included within the area recommended for wilderness designation to align the wilderness boundary along topographic features.

The 80 acres of BLM land in the eastern part of the WSA were recommended for release for nonwilderness uses to allow for the establishment of an utility corridor (underground facilities only) along the existing El Paso Pipeline right-of-way. The utility corridor was identified through the BLM's planning process.



**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area  
BATTLE CREEK WSA**

**Within Wilderness Study Area**

BLM (surface and subsurface)	32,180
Split Estate (BLM surface only)	0
Inholdings (state, private)	640
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,820</b>

**Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary**

BLM (within WSA)	32,100
BLM (outside WSA)	420
Split Estate (within WSA)	0
Split Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>32,520</b>
Inholdings (state, private) <sup>1</sup>	640
State land (outside WSA)	

**Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness**

BLM	80
Split Estate	0
<b>Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>80</b>
Inholdings (state, private)	0

<sup>1</sup>Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings included within the area recommended for designation.

### **3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations**

#### **Wilderness Characteristics**

##### **A. Naturalness**

The Battle Creek WSA consists of a plateau dissected by 19 miles of canyons. Wildlife within the WSA includes California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, river otter, beaver, raptors, waterfowl, chukars, sage grouse and redband trout. The WSA is predominantly natural with less than three percent impacted by human imprints. These imprints include a stone corral, 1.3 miles of cherry-stem road, one mile of way (vehicle tracks), a fence and seven livestock water reservoirs. All imprints are widely dispersed on the plateau.

##### **B. Solitude**

The WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, intimate seclusion of canyonlands and the vastness of seemingly undisturbed desert plateau lands and distant mountain ranges. The meandering character of the canyons and water courses provides excellent topographic screening between visitor groups traveling close together. The depth of the canyons combined with limited viewing distances creates a tremendous sense of seclusion. The length of canyons allows visitors to easily find campsites which are out of sight and sound of other groups and to adjust their rates of travel to avoid others.

From many high points on the plateau, hundreds to thousands of square miles of open spaces can be seen stretching from Steens Mountain in Oregon to Juniper Mountain in Idaho and southward to the Bull Run Mountains of Nevada. These vast open spaces instill a sense of separation from civilization.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The southwest corner of Idaho is a military operations area (MOA) for training pilots in low elevation, subsonic flight in mostly fighter-bomber type aircraft. Flights occur at elevations as low as 100 feet above the plateau. Due to the variation in flight patterns and schedules over this large area, impacts upon the solitude vary greatly. At times, jets can be seen and/or heard flying all day. Other times, one can travel for several days and not see or hear a military jet.

##### **C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation**

The natural features also contribute to outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation found in the WSA. The scenic natural features and diversity of rugged landforms attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running, as well as secondary activities of sightseeing, outdoor photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies and fishing. River running opportunities on the Owyhee River are of exceptionally high quality and considered nationally significant.

The miles of canyons, their diversely and severely eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyons are constantly aware of the forces of nature. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

The talus slopes of the canyons encourage travel near both the creek and the plateau. Recreational use of the plateau tends to concentrate near the canyon rims. These rimrock areas often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyons and provide opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyons below. The area of use on the plateau is likely to be fairly wide due to the meandering character of the canyon rimrock and major side drainages. The canyon system can be seen from many plateau areas. Hiking on the plateau provides an opportunity to experience vast open spaces.

#### **D. Special Features**

The Battle Creek WSA is rich in special features including scenic, wildlife and cultural values. The special features contribute significantly to the quality of the wilderness characteristics. Sensitive wildlife species found in the WSA include California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter and redband trout. Of particular concern is the population of bighorn sheep, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat for their survival. California bighorn sheep were successfully reintroduced into the Battle Creek area in the 1960s. An estimated 400 bighorns inhabit the Owyhee Canyonlands WSAs all year around. The WSA contains prehistoric archaeological sites scattered throughout the plateau and in caves within the canyons.

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

### A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Battle Creek WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. The landform is dominated by rhyolite uplands cut by deep canyons. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 other BLM areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

#### Ecosystem Representation

Bailey-Kuchler Classification	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province				
			<u>NATIONWIDE</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	3	76,699	136	4,359,340
			<u>IDAHO</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	12,997	35	949,916
			<u>NEVADA</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	1	32,407	29	1,273,919
			<u>CALIFORNIA</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	5	152,431
			<u>OREGON</u>	
Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem	0	0	67	1,983,074

**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation  
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Battle Creek WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population center.

**Table 3**  
**Wilderness Opportunities for Residents  
of Major Population Centers**

Population Centers	<u>NWPS Areas</u>		<u>Other BLM Studies</u>	
	areas	acres	areas	acres
Boise, Idaho	16	4,741,570	141	5,374,250



### **C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas**

The Battle Creek WSA would add to the geographical distribution of wilderness areas. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon system not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

#### **Manageability**

The WSA is manageable in the long term to protect wilderness characteristics. There are no resource uses which could not be adequately controlled or would affect the manageability of the wilderness. The WSA is over 20 miles from a paved highway. Vehicle access to the WSA is along dirt roads which have received minimal construction and little or no maintenance. Much of the plateau within the WSA is relatively flat but many areas (particularly those close to the canyons) are strewn with rock rubble and impassable to vehicles.

#### **Energy and Minerals Resource Values**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) prepared a mineral assessment for the WSA in 1986. The assessment found that the area has a low potential for gold, silver and tin and an unknown potential for oil and gas. The likelihood of any mineral resource occurring is remote.

The Battle Creek WSA contains no known mines, claims or prospects. Placer samples collected by the Bureau of Mines contained detectable levels of gold but not in concentrations sufficient to indicate a mineral resource. The source of the gold is thought to be 20 miles north of the WSA. About 50 percent of the area is covered by oil and gas leases or lease applications but no exploration has occurred.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits in the WSA.

#### **Impacts on Resources**

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

**Table 4**  
**Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative**  
**WSA ID-16-49E (ID-111-49E)(BATTLE CREEK)**

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p><b>WILDERNESS (32,520 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 32,520 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation on plateau from improved grazing practices and closure of 2 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance to prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 200 user days for backpacking and 190 user days for other activities. Such use not to impact naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (80 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 75 acres. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 5 acres from utility corridor construction activities. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to be only 10 user days and not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS (32,520 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 32,520 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation on plateau from improved grazing practices. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 140 user days for other activities. This use not to impact naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p> <p><b>NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Impacts under the Sub-alternative would be the same as those under the No Action Alternative except 5 acres would have a loss in naturalness and solitude/primitive recreation from utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (2,680 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 2,680 acres from management actions. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 140 user days for other activities. This use not to impact naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (29,500 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 29,495 acres. Slight enhancement of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing practices. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation on 5 acres from utility corridor construction activities. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 70 user days for backpacking and 120 user days for other activities. This use not to impact naturalness or on solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (27,020 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 27,020 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation on plateau from improved grazing practices and closure of 2 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance to prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 200 user days for backpacking and 150 user days for other activities. This use not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS (5,580 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 5,575 acres. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities from improved grazing practices. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities from utility corridor construction activities on 5 acres. Recreation use to reach 70 user days per annum in 20 years and have no impact on naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS (32,600 acres)</b> No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 32,600 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation from improved grazing practices and closure of 2 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. However, continued use of vehicle routes for rangeland facility maintenance to prevent complete rehabilitation of routes. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 20 user days for backpacking and 200 user days for other activities. Such use not to impact naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation use.</p>
Impacts on the Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 29,505 acres and retained in good condition on 3,015 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 77 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 3 acres by utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 29,165 acres and retained in good condition on 3,015 acres.</p> <p><b>NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Impacts the same as No Action Alternative except 3 acres of vegetation displaced by utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities retained in good condition on 2,200 acres.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 29,165 acres and retained in good condition on 335 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 3 acres by utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 24,005 acres and retained in good condition on 3,015 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 5,577 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 3 acres by utility corridor construction activities.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 29,585 acres and retained in good condition on 3,015 acres by grazing practices.</p>

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Selected Wildlife Populations (Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, Antelope and Sage Grouse)(Battle Creek WSA)	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices and reservoir on plateau would increase wildlife populations.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Utility corridor construction would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices and reservoir maintenance on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations.</p> <p><b>NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Utility corridor construction would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Impacts the same as those of the No Action Alternative.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Impacts the same as those of the Proposed Action except increased livestock numbers on unsuitable lands would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices and reservoir maintenance would increase wildlife populations.</p>
Impacts on Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation Use	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> 2 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use in wilderness displacing the number of visitor days to areas outside the WSA.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> No impact.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS/NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> All roads/ways to remain open for semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Use to reach 220 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> There are no road/ways within canyon wilderness to be closed to recreational vehicle use. Annual use in 20 years to reach 220 user days for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> 2 miles of interior roads closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Use to reach 220 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Impacts to be the same as those described under the Proposed Action.</p>
Impacts on Livestock Use	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual livestock use to remain at 2,720 AUMs over next 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS/NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Annual livestock use to increase from 2,720 AUMs to 3,250 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual livestock use to increase from 2,720 AUMs to 3,250 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Annual livestock use to increase from 2,720 AUM to 2,770 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Annual livestock use to remain at 2,720 AUMs over next 20 years on WSA lands.</p>
Impacts on Soil Erosion	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Road/way closure to reduce associated soil erosion by 11 tons per year within wilderness. Improved grazing practices combined with no projected increase in livestock use to reduce soil erosion by 5-15% on 29,500 acres of plateau.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 4.4 tons per year.</p>	<p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Despite improved grazing practices, moderate projected increases in livestock use to result in increased soil erosion of 5-10% overall on plateau.</p> <p><b>NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Impacts the same as No Action Alternative except utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 4.4 tons per year.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Despite improved grazing practices, moderate projected increases in livestock use to result in increased soil erosion of 5-10% overall on plateau.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 4.4 tons per year.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 11 tons per year within wilderness. Improved grazing practices combined with small projected increases in livestock use to reduce soil erosion by 5-15% overall on plateau.</p> <p><b>NONWILDERNESS</b> Utility corridor construction and maintenance to cause soil erosion of 4.4 tons per year.</p>	<p><b>WILDERNESS</b> Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 11 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with no projected increases in livestock use to reduce soil erosion by 5-15% overall on plateau.</p>

ISSUE TOPICS	PROPOSED ACTION	NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE)	CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE	ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE
Impacts on Local Income and Jobs (Battle Creek WSA)	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Income and employment data by individual WSA is not available. For Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex as a whole, the Proposed Action would contribute to a .3% increase in income and a .3% increase in employment over the next 20 years from livestock and recreational use of the WSAs in the 3-county area (Owyhee, Malheur and Elko Counties).	<b>NONWILDERNESS/NO ACTION SUBALTERNATIVE</b> Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years.	<b>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS</b> Both income and employment from WSA complex up .3% in 20 years.	<b>WILDERNESS</b> From WSA complex, income up .2% and employment up .3%.

## Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 32,520 acres as wilderness would have no significant social or economic impacts on the local communities of Owyhee County. The impact to local income and jobs was an issue analyzed in the study of the Battle Creek WSA.

## Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing issues and various management alternatives.

During the wilderness inventory for the Battle Creek roadless unit, two public comments supported the establishment of a WSA and nine opposed it. Comments in support stated the area possessed the characteristics necessary to be considered for wilderness as well as supplemental values such as wildlife, scenic, vegetation and cultural resources. Those opposed to the WSA felt that the area did not have significant wilderness characteristics and that "multiple use" would be better served if the area was released from further wilderness review.

During the public review of the Owyhee and Bruneau Management Framework Plans, 51 out of 55 comments supported wilderness designation for the Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex with no specific comments on the Battle Creek WSA. Comments supporting wilderness designation were primarily justified on the need for long-term protection of the high quality wilderness characteristics and special features of both the canyons and the plateau. Comments opposed to wilderness designation addressed a perception that "multiple use" would provide greater public benefit, that wilderness was not multiple use, and that public benefits could be optimized more effectively through a wild river designation of the Owyhee River and with the further development of livestock and potential mineral/energy resources on the plateau and in the Owyhee River's tributary canyons.

During the public comment period on the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, 448 written or oral comments supported all WSAs or portions of all WSAs in the Owyhee Canyonlands complex as wilderness, 46 comments opposed any wilderness in the WSA complex and 23 comments took no position. Those in support of wilderness for the Battle Creek WSA were mostly in favor of designating the entire WSA as wilderness. Support for the entire WSA as wilderness was based upon a desire to see wildlife, vegetation and other natural resources protected in the long term. Opposition to any of the WSA becoming wilderness was based upon a desire for improved livestock management opportunities, the need for continued use of the area for motorized recreation and the need to have further opportunities for the exploration and possible development of mineral and energy resources.

Eleven government agencies commented on this WSA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported wilderness designation to protect wildlife habitat; the Bonneville Power Administration did not object to wilderness provided there were adequate utility corridor options; the Department of the Air Force supported wilderness if no significant restrictions were placed on military overflights; and the Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness because of conflicts with its tactical flight training mission. The Bureau of Reclamation had no objection to wilderness designation while the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes stated the wilderness would prohibit construction of irrigation dams. The Owyhee County Commissioners opposed wilderness designation but supported national wild river designation for the Owyhee River. The Federal Aviation Agency, Soil Conservation Service and Environmental Protection Agency took no position.

Subsequent to the May 31, 1984, conclusion of the public comment period for the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, but prior to the completion of the Final EIS, 78 written comments were received. One of the comments opposed any wilderness designation in the WSA complex, one took no position and 76 supported wilderness designation. Of the wilderness advocates, 61 supported designating the entire Battle Creek WSA as wilderness. Most of this wilderness support was in response to a flyer sent out by the Committee for Idaho's High Desert and to an "alert" in the Sierra Club magazine.

**APPENDIX I -- BATTLE CREEK WSA**  
**Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Nonfederal Holdings**  
**Within Areas Recommended for Designation(1)**

Legal Description	Total Acreage	Number of Owners	Type of Ownership by Estate	Type of Ownership by Estate	Presently Proposed for Acquisition	Preferred Method of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition	Estimated Cost of Acquisition
			Surface Estate	Subsurface Estate			Land Costs (in \$)	Processing Costs (in \$)
Parcel No. 1 T. 13 S., R. 1 W. Sec. 16	600	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,400
Parcel No. 2 T. 13 S., R. 1 E. Sec. 16 SW1/4SW1/4	40	1	Private	Private	No	Exchange	N/A	2,000
Parcel No. 3 T. 13 S., R. 1 E. Sec. 5 SW1/4, S1/2N31/4, N1/2SE1/4	320	1	State	State	Yes	Exchange	N/A	2,000
Parcel No. 4 T. 14 S., R. 2 W. Sec. 1 S1/2NW1/4, E1/2SW1/4, S1/2SE1/4	240	1	Private	Private	Yes	Exchange	N/A	3,000

(1)The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a formal appraised value of the land or mineral estate but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring nonfederal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.

(2)Portion of this acreage within area recommended for designation. Acquisition through exchange would necessitate acquisition of entire parcel.